



Importance of Drought Tolerant Plants in Idaho

Introduction

Nearly 30 percent of household water use goes to landscaping. This project is aimed to educate people about the ways that they can use drought tolerant plants to conserve water while also having a beautiful garden. The Orton Botanical Garden in Twin Falls, Idaho strictly focuses on high desert and native plants throughout the garden. The garden demonstrates and educates the public about the significant dangers of overusing our natural water source.

Water conservation and drought tolerant plant education experiences provides by
Orton Botanical Garden, Twin Falls, ID

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Community education and outreach

In an effort to educate on this critical topic, many tours and classes are offered at Orton Botanical Garden to highlight the benefits of desert gardens in Idaho. Community involvement at local farmers markets and events have also been critical for engaging people.



Garden tour with LaMar Orton

What are drought tolerant plants?

Drought tolerant plants use a very small amount of water. Many plants used for xeriscape (a garden or landscape requiring little or no irrigation) are desert plants. Since a portion of Idaho is in the Great Basin Desert it means that desert plants like to grow here. It also means that we need to be aware of how much water we're using in our lives.

How do desert gardens help conserve water?

Desert landscaping can use 50-75% less water than the average green grass lawn. Average grass lawn uses 320 gallons of water per 1000 square feet. Water wise gardens save you money and conserve water. Through our research, we found plants that thrive in the Southern Central Idaho, which is zoned 5-6 climate, are recommended to be drought tolerant and cold hardy plants.

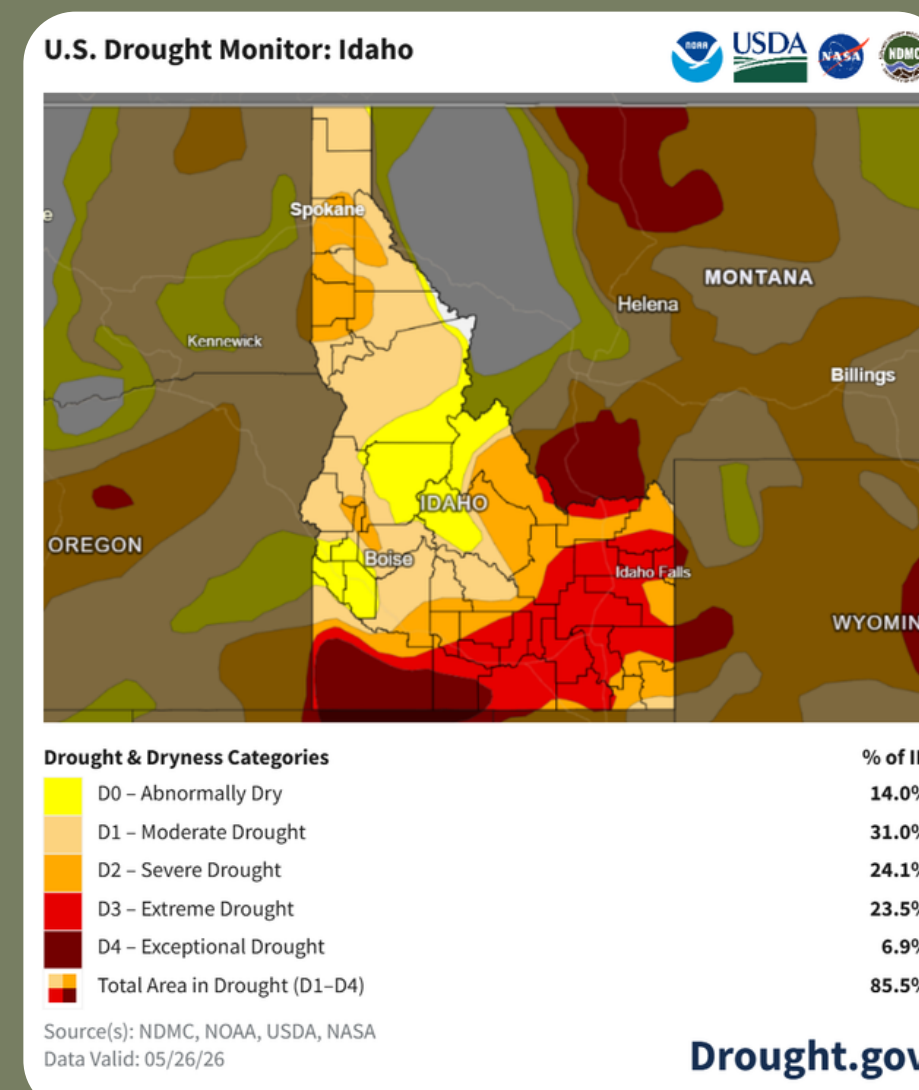
Many Native Plants Encourage Pollination

Droughts and other climate change have made it more difficult each year for pollinators and wildlife to survive. Research efforts are on going to cultivate pollinator and natural habitat shelter plants in the garden. Many native plants have vibrant flowers that pollinators and local wildlife love.

Importance of Educating

Below is a chart showing that 100% of Idaho is affected by the current drought. There are many ways that people can conserve water and we teach that high desert gardening is just one option. If Idaho continues to abuse the water that we have there can be permanent damage done to the ecosystem around us. The first step of conserving water is being educated.

Idaho Drought Map



Creating Bee Hotels with Youth Camp

Education and conservation can also start at a young age. We brought youth groups such as the local Boys and Girls Club and Culture for Change in Twin Falls into the garden to teach them in engaging ways. They learned about pollination, local water systems, and our human impacts on nature. By planting the seeds of water conservation in their minds, we can see them continue to grow into people who care about the world around them.

Conclusion

Drought tolerant plants can help Idaho become a place that is conscious of the water that we use. Educating the community is the first step into making people aware of the water conservation efforts that they could be involved in. By educating people of all ages we can make Idaho a better place to live, not only for us but all of the other important living things around us.